



**Research Talent is Europe's
Strategic Advantage**

**30 years of MSCA
through EU-LIFE voices**

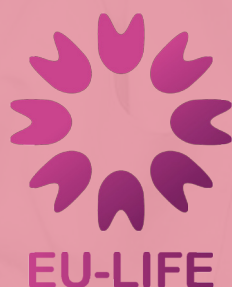




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September 2026

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30 years of MSCA

Europe's capacity to produce excellent research and generate new knowledge begins with people. For 30 years, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA) have enabled research talent from early-stage doctoral candidates to postdoctoral researchers and research managers. They have facilitated the development of their ideas, skills and careers across borders, disciplines and sectors. Since 1996, **MSCA has unlocked the potential of more than 150,000 researchers, including 23 Nobel Prize laureates as fellows, supervisors or project coordinators.**

30 years
of MSCA

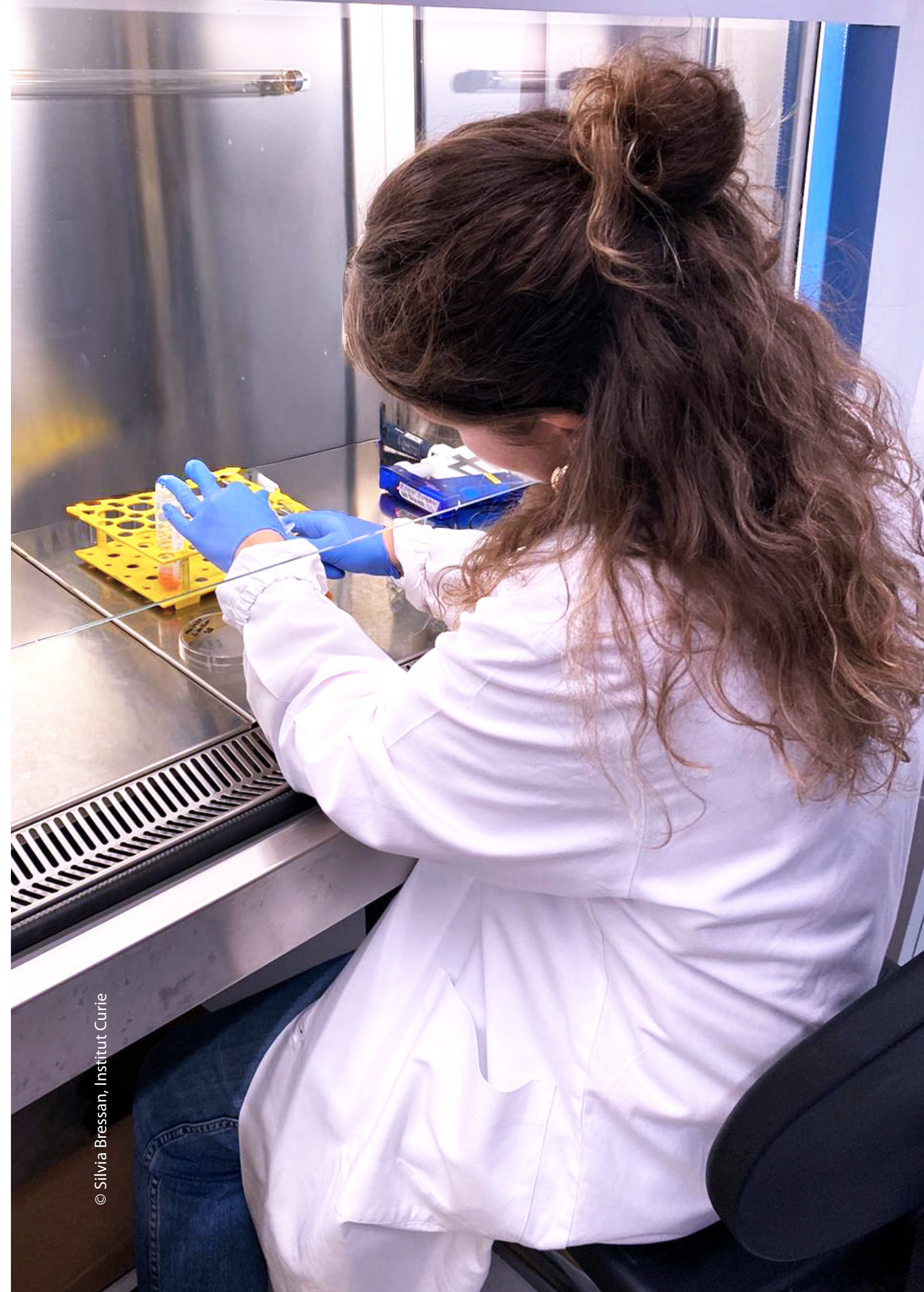
>150,000
researchers supported

23
Nobel Prize laureates involved

MSCA is a core programme for the European research and innovation ecosystem. Beyond building talent by supporting individual researchers, it also strengthens Europe's research institutions. It spreads good practices and connects research organisations, universities, hospitals, companies and civil society, building networks that continue long after individual projects end. In doing so, MSCA develops the research talent, the knowledge, and the environments that Europe needs for scientific excellence, innovation, resilience and long-term competitiveness.

EU-LIFE has consistently worked to ensure that this model is preserved and strengthened. **The alliance's message for FP10 is clear: MSCA should remain in Pillar I as a fully bottom-up, excellence-driven programme, equally open to all scientific domains and equipped with a budget that matches its value and scope.**

This publication brings together the **voices of researchers and experts who have experienced MSCA directly.** Their testimonials show the many impacts of MSCA, and how the programme builds the net to sustain an excellent, innovative and strong European research ecosystem.



© Silvia Bressan, Institut Curie

Opportunities without borders



MSCA gives researchers the conditions to cross borders, enter new environments and pursue opportunities that might otherwise remain out of reach. Financial security, fair recruitment and international mobility allow researchers to move, sharing their knowledge and perspectives while gaining new ones along the way. These stories show how access, belonging and exchange strengthen the European research community.



JESSLYN NAGALIN YONATHAN
Current MSCA fellow | BRIC



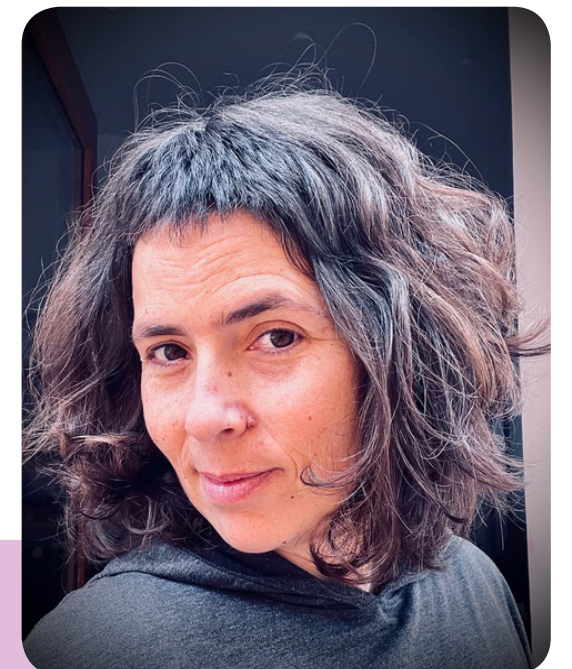
Being someone from the other side of the globe meant that pursuing a PhD in Europe required several extra steps. These could be small, like additional paperwork, or much bigger, like securing funding and a sense of financial stability so far away from home for the next few years. **MSCA has allowed me to overcome this major barrier and take the first step toward my academic career.**



SILVIA BRESSAN
Current MSCA fellow | Institut Curie

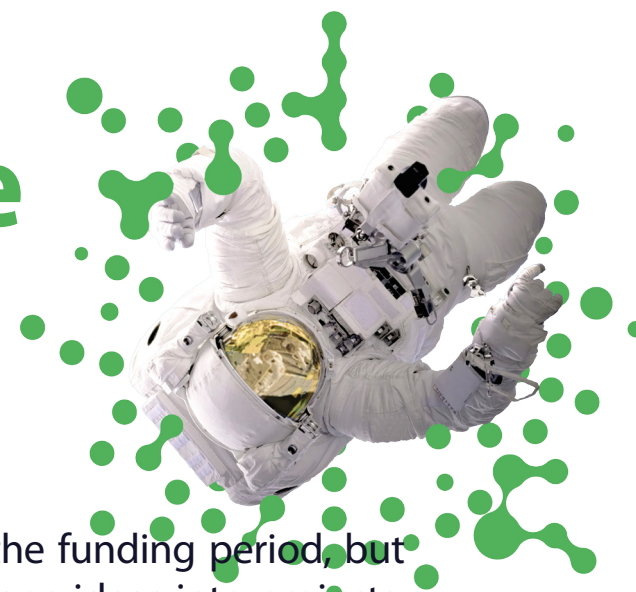
MSCA has shown me how valuable it is to step into a new scientific environment and learn from people with different expertise and perspectives. Some of the most rewarding experiences of my fellowship have come from the exchanges, collaborations, and ideas that emerged from working in an international setting. I hope MSCA continues to give young researchers the freedom to explore ambitious questions, build strong networks, and develop the confidence and independence needed to shape their future careers.

MARIA DIAMANTAKI
Postdoctoral Researcher | IMBB
Former MSCA fellow | Baylor College of Medicine & IMBB



The MSCA Individual Fellowship broadened my scientific perspective by enabling me to conduct research in the US and bring new expertise back to Greece. **It equipped me with new methods and fostered international collaborations that continue to shape my research.**

Space to become independent



MSCA does not only support researchers during the funding period, but prepares them for their future. Fellows learn to shape ideas into projects, manage resources, lead collaborations, acquire new skills and build confidence. This section shows how MSCA creates space for researchers to take ownership of their science and grow into independent leaders.

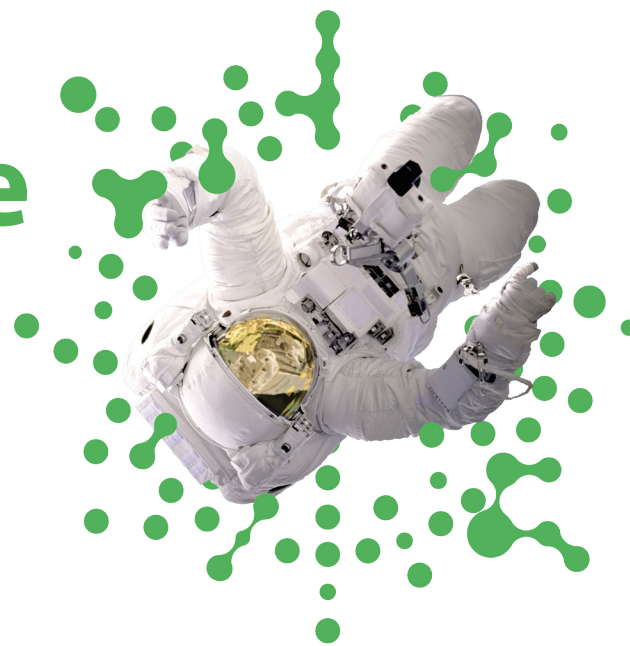


PATRICIA ALTEA MANZANO
Junior Group Leader | CABIMER
Former MSCA fellow | VIB-KU Leuven

The MSCA Fellowship was a turning point in my career. It enabled me to join the outstanding Prof Sarah-Maria Fendt's laboratory at VIB-KU Leuven, one of Europe's leading research centers. **Beyond gaining highly valuable scientific and technical expertise, it expanded my international network and visibility.** The fellowship also laid the foundation for my transition to an independent group leader and for securing an ERC Starting Grant.



Space to become independent



CHIARA FRANCAVILLA
Associate Professor | Technical
University of Denmark
Former MSCA fellow | IEO

“

I received an MSCA Fellowship in 2010 to move from Milan, Italy, to Copenhagen, Denmark, combining cancer signalling research with phosphoproteomics and bioinformatics.

MSCA trained me in systems biology, expanded my network, and helped establish my independent research, leading to publications that secured Wellcome Trust funding to launch my own group in Manchester, UK in 2016. I am now Associate Professor in Denmark.

“

ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ TANGUMA
Current MSCA fellow | CEITEC

As a current fellow, the MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship gives me the autonomy and resources to develop my project and push my ideas forward with **high-level supervision**. Managing my project provides practical experience and helps me build a solid base for my future independence as an academic researcher.

MARGHERITA YAYOI TURCO
Group Leader | FMI

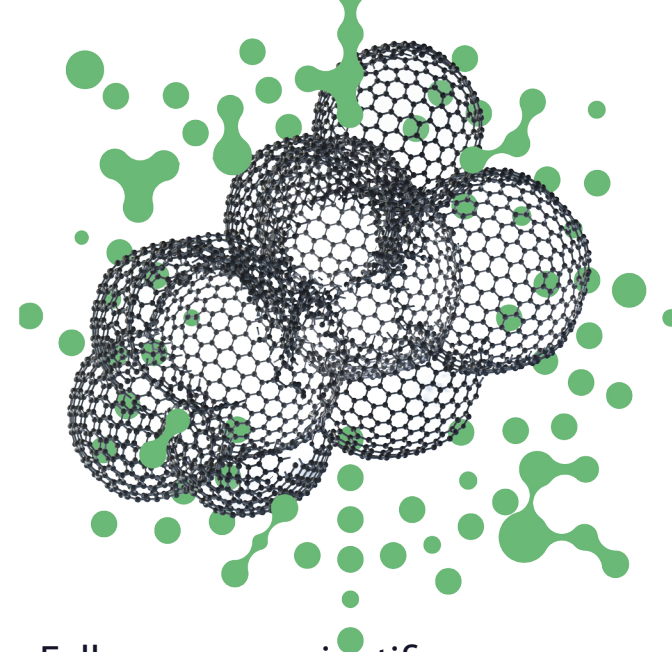
Former MSCA fellow | University
of Cambridge and Centre for
Trophoblast Research



“

MSCA came at a critical point in my career. **It gave me the time and independence to pursue an ambitious project in an underfunded area:** understanding how the human placenta develops, identifying its stem cells and establishing new experimental models to study them. The success of this work brought greater visibility and credibility to the research and helped open the door to further funding and opportunities.

More than one path to impact



MSCA can shape careers in many different ways. Fellows carry scientific expertise, leadership skills and international networks into roles across research, innovation and society. The experiences in this section show how the programme creates different routes to impact, extending beyond a single project or a single definition of academic success.

VICTOR ORIA

Principal Research Scientist | Victoria Biomedical Research Institute

Former MSCA fellow | BRIC



The MSCA LEAD Fellowship was instrumental in shaping my path to research leadership. During this fellowship, I pursued independent research ideas about the tumor vasculature and matrisome, leading to impactful publications. Importantly, this fellowship also enhanced my supervision, mentorship, and leadership skills, which are quite useful in my current role. Beyond the funding, the MSCA Fellowship provided a structured programme with different courses such as creativity in research, self-leadership in science, and negotiation skills, among others, useful in developing a curious and thoughtful researcher.

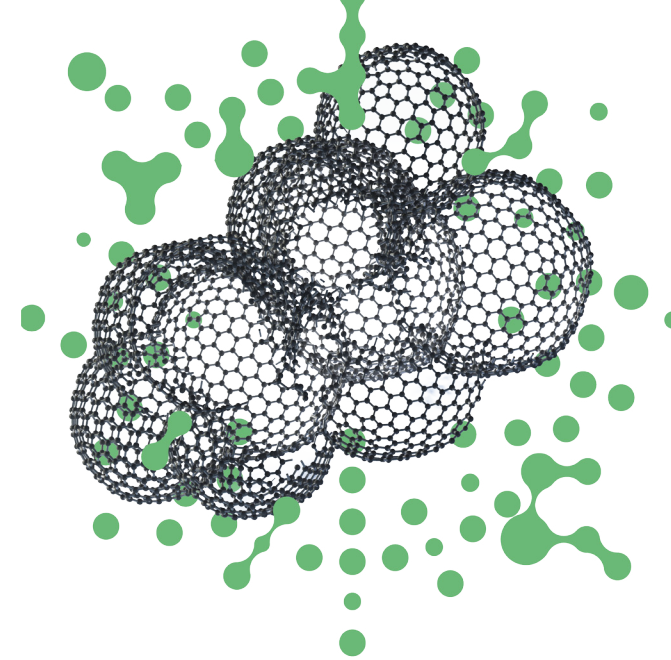


VICTORIA BIOMEDICAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE

A centre of excellence in global health research



More than one path to impact



TUAN-ANH NGUYEN
Current MSCA fellow | CeMM

Getting funding for your own research idea is highly rewarding. Beyond the prestige, financial independence and training opportunities it provides, **obtaining an MSCA Fellowship has helped me develop essential skills in defining, structuring, writing, and ultimately managing research proposals** — key competencies that are essential for my future career ambitions.



GIAN MARIA GRECO
Chair | Marie Curie Alumni Association

The MSCA has shaped far more than my own career. Through my work with the MCAA, **I have seen how one fellowship can become the beginning of a lifelong community, creating collaborations, friendships and a shared commitment to supporting others.** For me, this human legacy is among MSCA's greatest achievements.

SILVIA BRESSAN
Current MSCA fellow
| Institut Curie



In 2025, I was awarded a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Postdoctoral Fellowship, which gave me the opportunity to join the Translational Immunology team at Institut Curie in Paris. After my PhD and postdoctoral work in molecular oncology and immunotherapy development, **I wanted to challenge myself in a new scientific environment, expand my network, and work on research that could be more directly connected to patients.** Through MSCA, I was able to bring together these ambitions and develop a project focused on treatment response and resistance, biomarker discovery and validation, and the development of more effective cancer immunotherapies.

A culture where scientists thrive



Researchers thrive when they are recruited fairly and work in environments that support professional development, well-being, peer connections and trust. MSCA helps create these conditions through transparent recruitment, structured training and strong communities. These experiences show how research culture shapes both personal development and scientific work.



CRISTINA VILLANOVA
Grant & External Funding
Manager | FMI



From a grant manager's perspective, MSCA programmes do much more than fund research. Doctoral Networks and Postdoctoral Fellowships bring together researchers, supervisors and professional support staff, **creating strong teams built on trust, knowledge sharing and long-term collaboration that often continues well beyond the project.**



JESSLYN NAGALIN YONATHAN
Current MSCA fellow | BRIC

Having a career born within an international and rigorous setting thanks to MSCA, I hope to continue nurturing it through the program. **I particularly appreciate the MSCA's emphasis on soft skills and professional development, which was evident even during the recruitment process. I was also pleasantly surprised by the transparency and fairness that characterized every stage of this program.**

Although I have only been part of MSCA for a short time, it has given me a strong sense of pride, belonging, and security. I am also very grateful to have a cohort to rely on and to be part of such a collaborative environment.



VICTOR ORIA
Principal Research Scientist | Victoria
Biomedical Research Institute
Former MSCA fellow | BRIC

The networking opportunities were the most valuable. During my fellowship, we established a peer group of fellows in the same year where we would discuss different topics such as stress management, grant writing, peer review of fellows' research, project management, and journaling, among others. In addition, together with other MSCA LEAD fellows at BRIC, we held joint activities outside the laboratory to foster our personal relationships. This, in turn, created a **culture of trust and unity among fellows, which was an important anchor during the postdoctoral fellowship.**

Strengthening institutions



MSCA's impact does not stop with the fellow. Researchers bring new expertise, methods and perspectives into their host teams. Joint training, secondments and collaborative networks create critical mass around emerging fields, while institutions strengthen their capacity to recruit, support and retain international talent. The result is a programme that develops research talent and strengthens the environments in which excellent research happens.



SILVIA GÓMEZ RECIO
Secretary General | YERUN

MSCA is one of the clearest examples of how European science policy ambitions can deliver concrete benefits for researchers and institutions. By supporting excellent bottom-up research, training, collaboration, and mobility, it helps researchers build independence, skills and international networks, while making research careers more attractive across Europe. **Its impact also extends to institutions, shaping policies and practices around doctoral and postdoctoral training, supervision, career development and international cooperation.** MSCA clearly reinforces Europe's research talent by strengthening research environments and collaboration across disciplines, countries and sectors.



GIAN MARIA GRECO
Chair | Marie Curie Alumni Association

I believe that the MSCA turns European policy ambitions into something tangible in researchers' lives. It gives people the opportunity to cross borders, disciplines and sectors, while acquiring new skills and building lasting collaborations. **Each individual journey strengthens the institutions involved and helps create a more open, connected and innovative European (and international) research community.**

EDUARD SABIDÓ
Head of Proteomics Unit | CRG



As a research team, MSCA programmes like Doctoral Networks have enabled us to attract talented young international researchers and build strong scientific collaborations in computational proteomics. Through these networks, **early-career researchers become embedded in both a stimulating local research environment and a broader European community of scientists working on similar challenges, creating the critical mass needed to advance strategic research areas.**

Strengthening institutions



VERONIKA MICHLOVÁ ŠTĚRBOVÁ
Research Project Manager | CEITEC



At CEITEC Masaryk University, especially MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowships make a significant contribution to research teams by attracting outstanding international researchers who bring new expertise, complementary methodologies and fresh scientific perspectives. It often leads to the development of new research directions, interdisciplinary collaborations and high-impact publications. Their presence also **strengthens the international dimension of research groups, expands collaborative networks and increases the competitiveness of teams in Horizon Europe and other international funding calls.**



CRISTINA VILLANOVA
Grant & External Funding Manager | FMI

MSCA has strengthened our institutional capacity by attracting international talent, improving grant management expertise and reinforcing support services. From my perspective, **it has also fostered a more collaborative culture, increased our visibility and contributed to a more competitive, international and interdisciplinary research environment.**

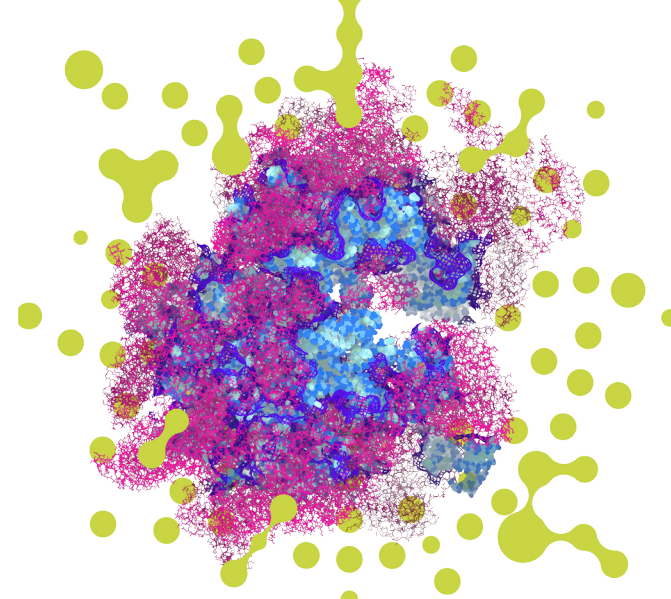


DOROTA LIBISZOWSKA
Head of Grants Office | IIMCB



MSCA benefits institutions by helping to develop future scientific leaders, while giving individual researchers valuable opportunities to advance their careers. We experience this at IIMCB. Few of our group leaders previously held MSCA Individual Fellowships. Their paths show how international mobility builds the skills, networks and independence needed to lead research teams at renowned institutions such as IIMCB.

Keeping MSCA strong



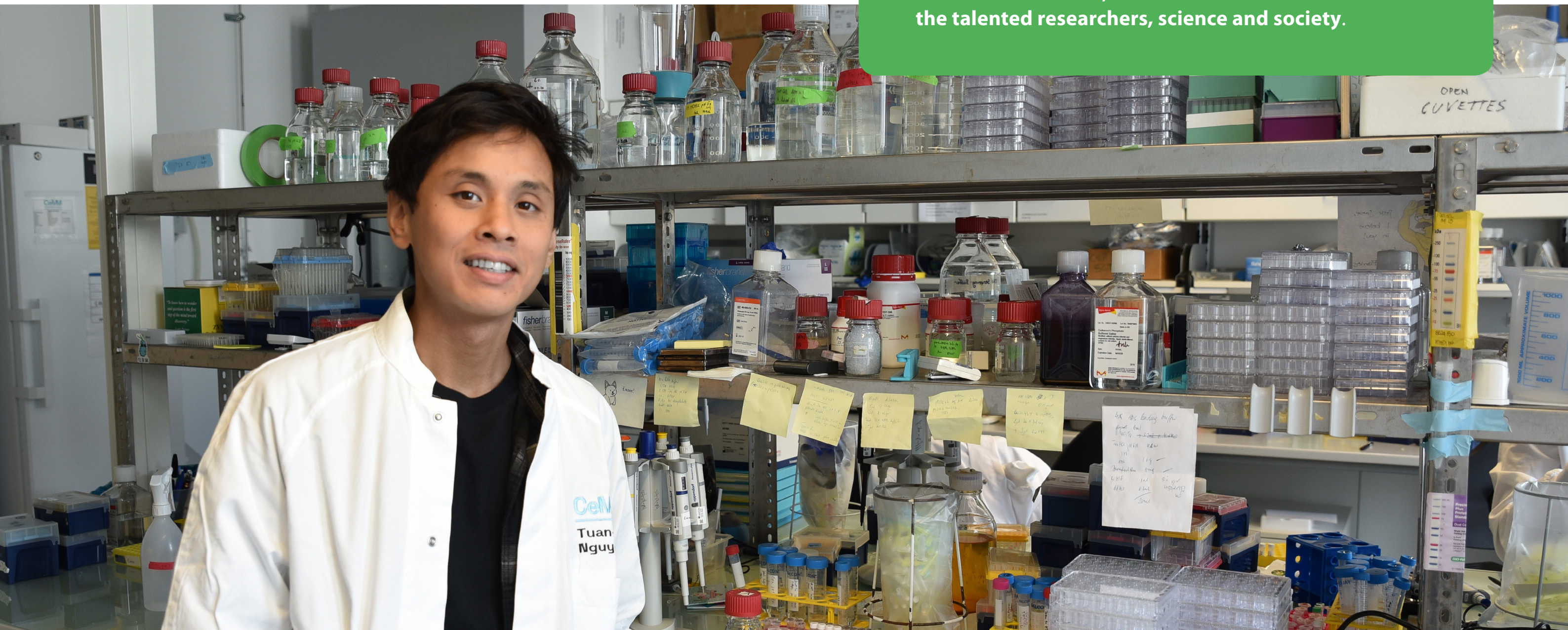
MSCA works because it invests in excellent researchers across all fields and gives them the freedom, mobility, training and support to develop ambitious ideas. Preserving the MSCA model is essential, but it is also crucial to reinforce it. Demand continues to exceed available funding and career transitions remain difficult. The next Framework Programme, FP10, is an opportunity to protect MSCA's strengths and give it the scale to meet these challenges.



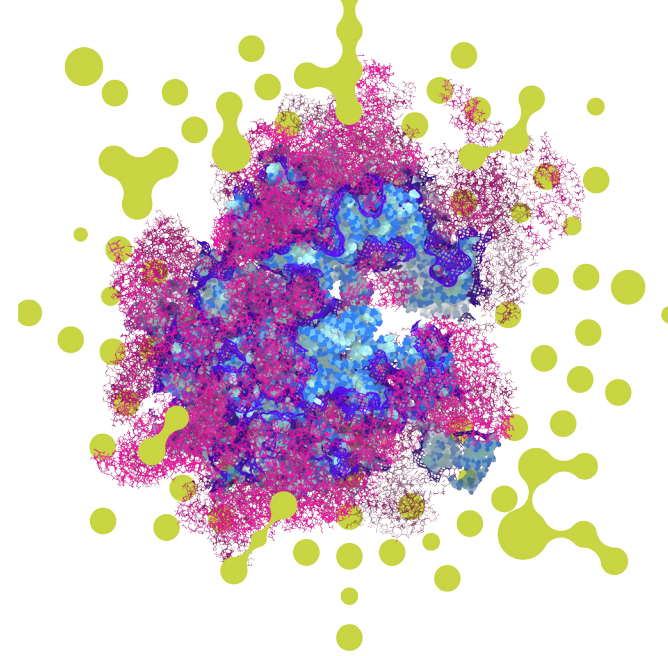
TUAN-ANH NGUYEN
Current MSCA fellow | CeMM

The strong emphasis on personal and professional development is one of the defining strengths of the MSCA. I am grateful for the opportunities it has provided to attend conferences and training courses that have broadened my skills and perspectives as a researcher.

The vision and principles of the MSCA remain as relevant and valuable as ever. Many outstanding postdoctoral researchers submit excellent project proposals, yet only a fraction can be funded. **Maintaining and, where possible, expanding the funding, even in times of financial constraint, is an investment in the future of the talented researchers, science and society.**



Keeping MSCA strong



SILVIA GÓMEZ RECIO
Secretary General | YERUN



Policymakers should preserve the features that have made MSCA successful: why would you change a recipe that works? Scientific excellence, its bottom-up and researcher-driven character, openness across disciplines, international and intersectoral collaboration, and strong support for research careers are the essential ingredients that must continue in future. Its openness to new ideas allows Europe to be at the forefront of future priorities and innovation.

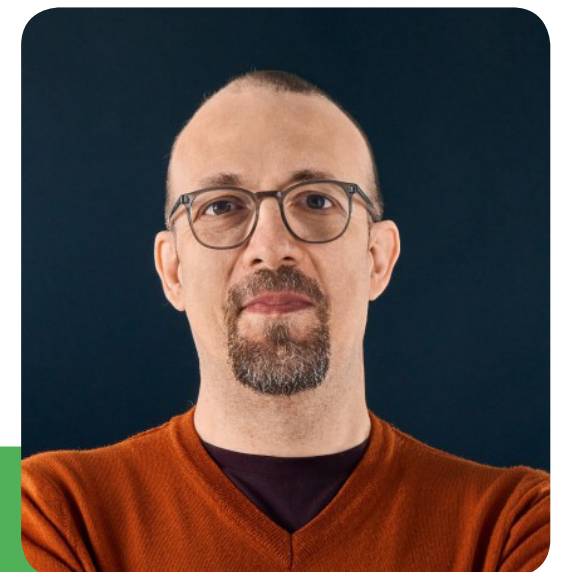
At the same time, MSCA needs resources that match its ambitions. **Policymakers should therefore strengthen the programme with adequate funding, improved prospects for success, and simpler implementation.** We need much more of MSCA!



MARGHERITA YAYOI TURCO
Group Leader | FMI
Former MSCA fellow | University of Cambridge & Centre for Trophoblast Research

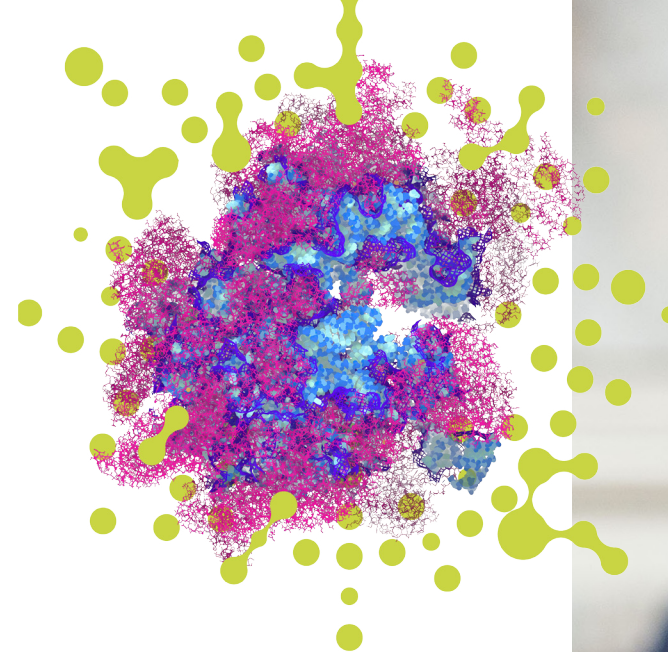
We need to protect what makes MSCA so valuable: giving researchers the freedom and opportunity to pursue ambitious ideas and build their own scientific path. **Supporting emerging and underfunded areas is particularly important, as research that receives limited attention today can become an important area tomorrow,** as we are now seeing with human placental research.

GIAN MARIA GRECO
Chair | Marie Curie Alumni Association



I believe that policymakers should preserve what makes MSCA distinctive, that is: its bottom-up, high-quality-driven and international traits, together with its support for mobility and collaboration. They should also increase its budget and strengthen fair working conditions, good supervision, career development and practical support for researchers moving across borders.

Keeping MSCA strong



ALEJANDRO HERNANDEZ TANGUMA
Current MSCA fellow | CEITEC



The MSCA Postdoctoral Fellowship is a practical tool for postdoctoral researchers trying to establish themselves. However, to increase effectiveness, **policymakers should consider adding bridge funding options at the end of the grant.** This would help researchers navigate the transition to stable roles in Europe and retain young researchers within European institutions.



CRISTINA VILLANOVA
Grant & External Funding Manager | FMI

MSCA is one of the most researcher-friendly EU programmes. **I would encourage policymakers to invest even more in its long-term impact by strengthening links with follow-up funding opportunities and supporting institutions in retaining the excellent talent attracted through MSCA.**



20 Medical Doctors	7 Hosting centres	37 Partner organisations	10 European countries
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EMERALD, the first International PhD Programme for Medical Doctors, shows how MSCA can strengthen an entire training ecosystem. Funded by Horizon 2020 under MSCA, the programme trains 20 medical doctors to become physician-scientists who can connect fundamental discoveries and frontier technologies with translational research, clinical practice and patients' needs.

The consortium brings together 7 hosting centres and 37 partner organisations, including the EU-LIFE members CRG, Institut Curie, BRIC, GIMM, MDC, NKI and VIB. EU-LIFE was instrumental in creating the consortium and designing the project. It is also one of 37 partner organisations across 10 European countries.



DAVID BRENDA
EMERALD Programme Manager | CRG

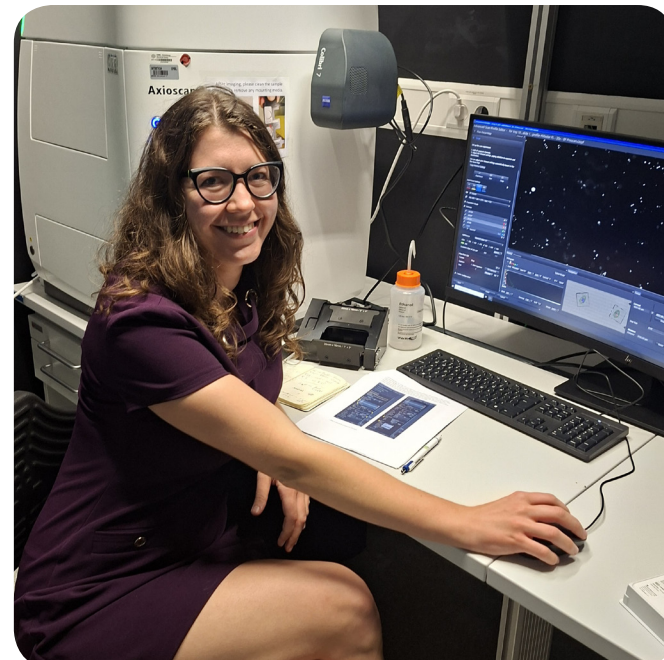


Having worked in both research institutes and hospitals, I know how much the scientific and medical communities gain from understanding each other. By investing in physician-scientist careers, you invest in every discovery they will make and every patient they will ever treat. **We need more physician-scientists and they need more career opportunities like EMERALD.**



Making science a profession

LILIIA DEMIANENKO
EMERALD fellow | MDC



A career at the intersection of medicine and research

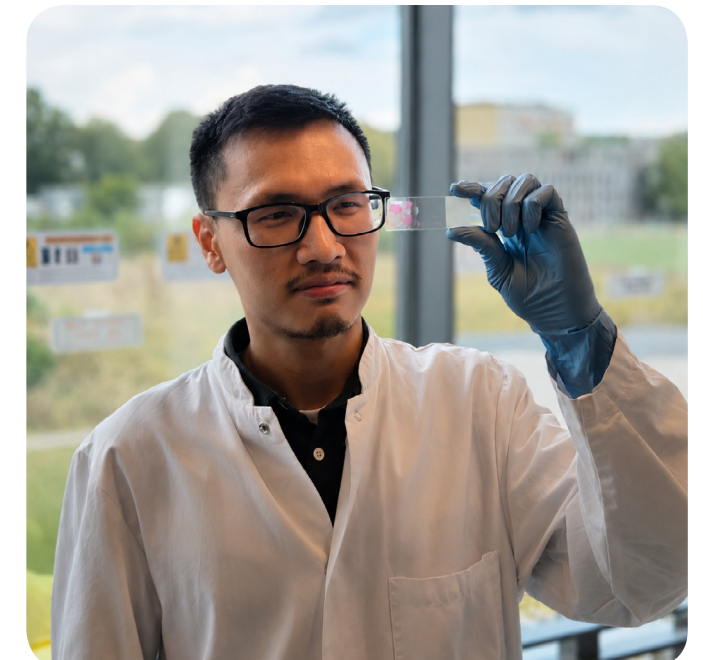


During my medical studies, I volunteered as a computational neuroscientist during weekends and holidays. Although medicine was intellectually fulfilling, it did not fully satisfy my curiosity and desire to explore questions that still have no answers. Through the EMERALD PhD programme, science became my profession. Looking ahead, I hope to use the scientific skills, international experience and network I gained to pursue a career at the intersection of medicine and research, ultimately improving patient care.

Structured European clinician-scientist programmes can provide a supportive and protected environment where young doctors can combine clinical training with cutting-edge research. **I wish more young doctors had the opportunity to pursue both medicine and science, rather than being forced to choose between them.**

A fuller view of disease

TRUNG DINH NGUYEN
EMERALD fellow | BRIC



Combining clinical insight with molecular technologies

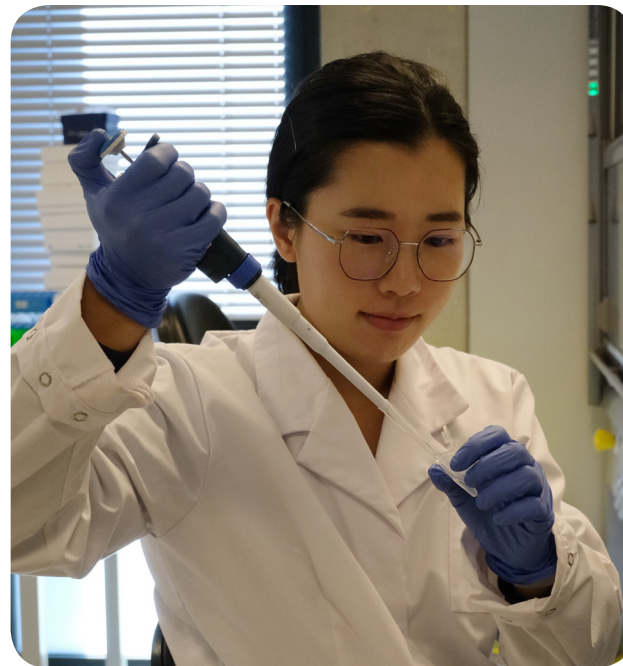


EMERALD program gave me the opportunity to deepen my molecular research skills early in my career and pursue the questions that matter most to me in MASLD/MASH and liver cancer. **Working in a leading EU-LIFE centre with access to advanced technologies has shaped how I approach disease. I hope to carry these skills into future roles and contribute to better care and treatment.**

EMERALD changed how I see disease. Moving from ultrasound, MRI and histopathology to spatial mass spectrometry and multiplex imaging, I could study steatosis, cirrhosis and immune context at molecular and cellular resolution. It taught me that a patient's disease state is far more complex than any single clinical or molecular view can capture.

Keeping the clinical perspective

SHIJIE TANG
EMERALD fellow | VIB-KU Leuven



Learning across research cultures and disciplines



EMERALD brought me into a leading basic and translational cancer research environment at VIB-KU Leuven. It showed me that my Medical Doctor background was not something to leave behind, but a perspective that could shape the questions I ask in research. Looking ahead, I hope to pursue cancer research where patient observations inspire biological questions and mechanistic insights explain clinical patterns.

Beyond funding, EMERALD gave me repeated exposure to research environments beyond my host institute. **Through four annual summer schools in four countries, I encountered different scientific cultures, institutes, and career paths.** More than the training itself, this experience reminded me that good research grows from curiosity, openness and the ability to learn across boundaries.

A new way of thinking

CLAUDIA MARIELA BRENIS GÓMEZ
EMERALD fellow | VIB



Connecting clinical questions with basic research



EMERALD completely changed my way of thinking. Working in the hospital, I felt frustrated by not being able to provide more answers to patients' problems. **EMERALD changed my perspective, but also made me more aware of the major gap between research and clinical practice.** I aim to work as a physician-scientist, using my knowledge in basic research to address the problems I encounter in my own patients.

The greatest impact was being part of an international community, sharing experiences, knowledge, friendship and future collaborations. Getting to know people from different countries and backgrounds broadened my perspective, both professionally and personally. These connections continue beyond EMERALD.

From experience to policy



EU-LIFE's engagement with MSCA connects the day-to-day experience of research institutes with policy dialogue. Across the alliance, fellows, supervisors, grant experts, project managers, trainers and institutional leaders see where the programme creates value and where its implementation can be improved. Bringing these perspectives together allows EU-LIFE to contribute practical evidence to policymaking and a long-term institutional view.

The alliance works at both the strategic and implementation levels. It gathers input from member institutes, responds to policy consultations, develops recommendations, builds common positions with other organisations and contributes to dialogue with the European Commission, the European Research Executive Agency and the wider MSCA community. Through this work, EU-LIFE advocates for adequate investment and for the conditions that make the programme effective, including transparent recruitment, inclusive mobility, high-quality supervision, recognition of research managers and responsible research practices.

For EU-LIFE, sustained collaboration and co-creation are essential to preserve what works in MSCA, define high standards in research careers, identify emerging needs and boost excellent research and talent.

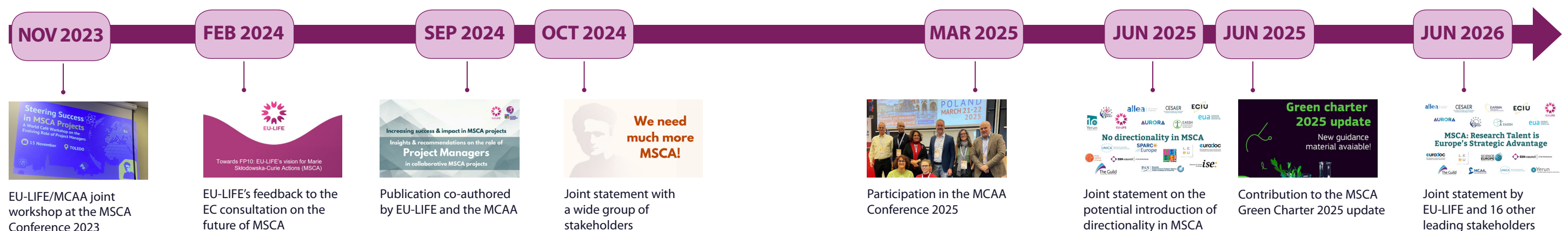
IRIS URIBESALGO
Policy Officer | EU-LIFE



MSCA enables researchers to pursue excellent research while promoting high standards in areas such as training, supervision and development that shape how research is done and led.

The impact is also structural. **MSCA translates European ambitions for research careers, equality & inclusion, open science, assessment and sustainability into institutional practice.** As MSCA-trained researchers progress into leadership, supervisory and management roles, these practices spread further. MSCA networks and collaborations also strengthen connections across people, institutions, disciplines and countries, often beyond individual projects. **Sustained and increased investment in MSCA is therefore an investment not only in today's research, but also in Europe's long-term capacity for excellent research and innovation.**

Latest contributions



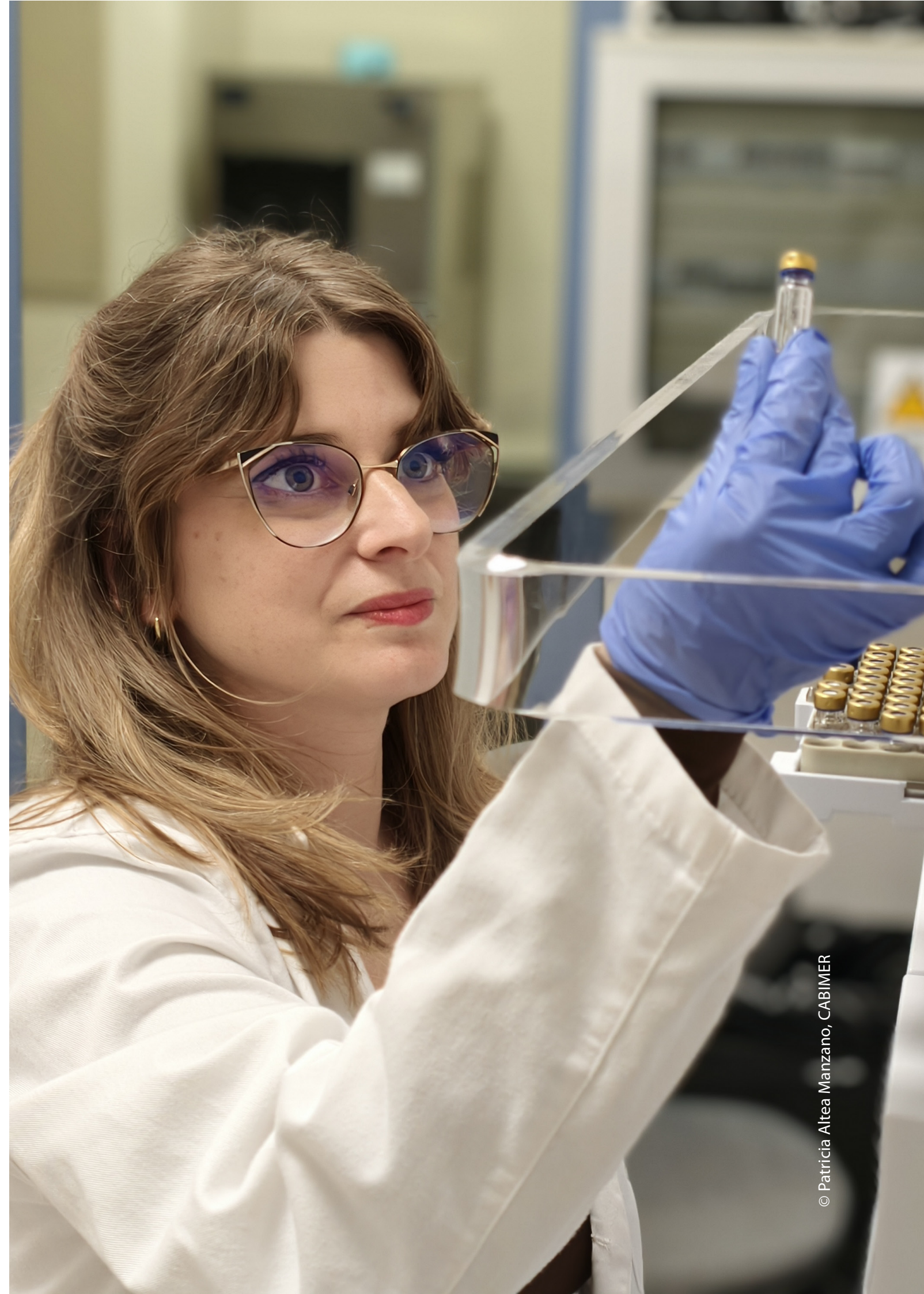


The next 30 years

Thirty years of MSCA demonstrate what Europe gains when it invests in researchers and gives excellent ideas room to develop. Its effects can be seen in individual careers, but extend much further. **Through MSCA, researchers strengthen teams, build lasting collaborations, help institutions evolve and exchange knowledge across countries, sectors and disciplines.**

The voices in this publication also point to the work ahead. Europe needs more opportunities for excellent researchers, stronger continuity across career stages, broader participation across regions and stable support for the bottom-up model that has made MSCA successful. **These are not separate ambitions. Together, they determine whether Europe can attract, develop and retain the talent on which its research and innovation future depends.**

EU-LIFE will continue to bring the experience of its community into this debate and to work with European institutions and partner organisations to strengthen MSCA. **The 30th anniversary is a moment to celebrate a programme that works, and a reason to give it the resources and trust needed to fulfil its ambition in the decades ahead.**



About EU-LIFE

EU-LIFE is an alliance of research centres whose mission is to support and strengthen European research excellence. EU-LIFE members are leading research institutes in their countries and internationally renowned for producing excellent research, widely transferring knowledge and nurturing talent. Since its foundation in 2013, EU-LIFE is a stakeholder in European policy participating regularly in the EU policy dialogue. More at <https://eu-life.eu/>

EU-LIFE Partners

Centre for Genomic Regulation (CRG, Spain) | Central European Institute of Technology (CEITEC, Czech Republic) | European Institute of Oncology (IEO, Italy) | Flanders Institute for Biotechnology (VIB, Belgium) | Friedrich Miescher Institute for Biomedical Research (FMI, Switzerland) | Gulbenkian Institute for Molecular Medicine (GIMM, Portugal) | Institut Curie (Curie, France) | Institute for Molecular Medicine Finland (FIMM, Finland) | Institute of Molecular Biology & Biotechnology (IMBB FORTH, Greece) | International Institute of Molecular and Cell Biology in Warsaw (IIMCB, Poland) | Max Delbrück Center (MDC, Germany) | Research Center for Molecular Medicine of the Austrian Academy of Sciences (CeMM, Austria) | Ruđer Bošković Institute (RBI, Croatia) | The Francis Crick Institute (Crick, United Kingdom) | The Netherlands Cancer Institute (NKI, The Netherlands) | The University of Copenhagen Biotech Research & Innovation Centre (BRIC, Denmark)